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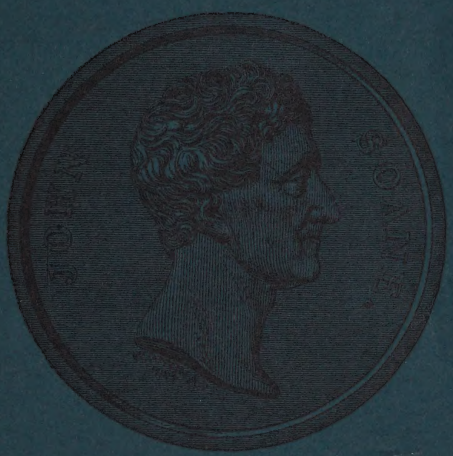
glish Eighteenth-Century Sculptures in Sir John Soane's Museum



By Arthur T. Bolton, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.

Soane Medallist and Curator of Sir John Soane's Museum

with 21 Illustrations

SOANE MUSEUM PUBLICATIONS, No. 7

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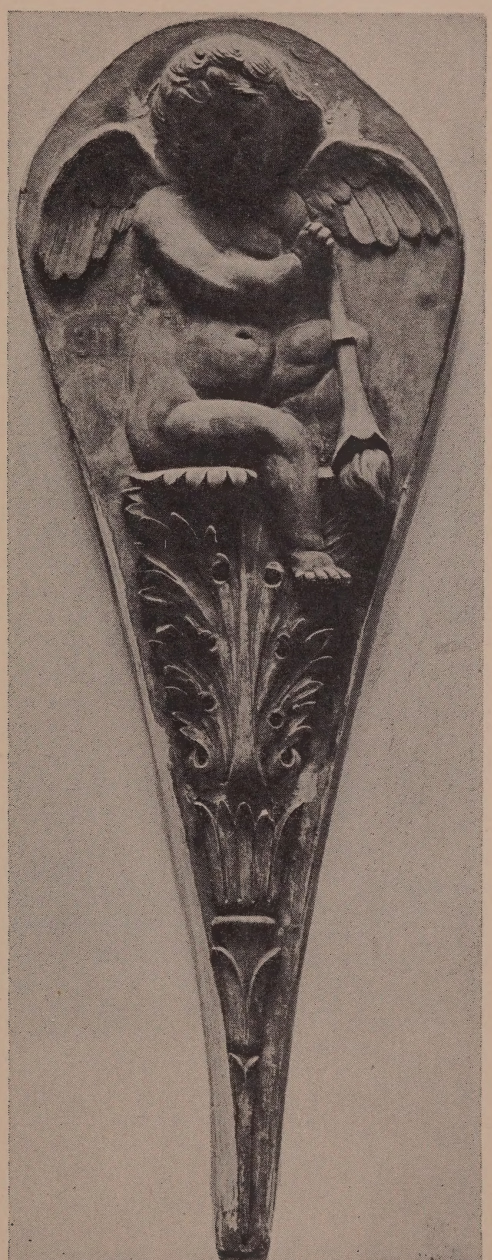
English Eighteenth-Century Sculptures in Sir John Soane's Museum



SPANDRIL IN THE PITT CENOTAPH, NATIONAL DEBT REDEMPTION OFFICE, OLD JEWRY.
Sir John Soane, R. A., Architect, 1817-18.

SOANE MUSEUM PUBLICATION, No. 7

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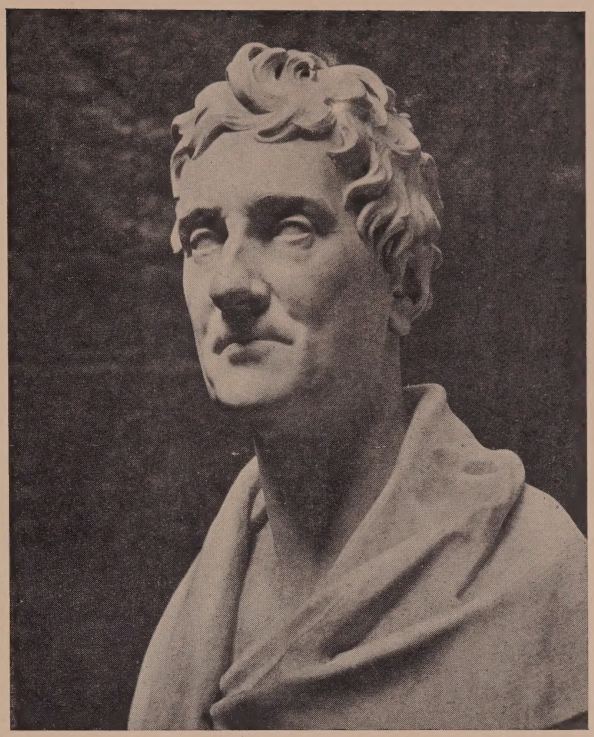
FOREWORD

In pursuance of Sir John Soane's intention to illustrate The Three Arts, and promote their study, the Curator has in this Publication of the Soane Museum, selected and dealt with examples of Sculpture, more or less designedly associated with Architecture.



SIR JOHN SOANE R. A. BY SIR FRANCIS CHANTREY R. A.

Soane's friend Sir Francis Chantrey R. A. (1781-1841) was a Life Trustee of the Sir John Soane Museum from 1837-41. It would appear that the famous Sculptor had previously taken a keen interest in Soane's Collection as he ends a letter of July 21, 1830 to Soane with the assurance "Positively you shall have the best of Banks on friday morning."

Sir John Soane was architect for the alterations of Chantrey's house in Belgrave Place, designing a very characteristic Ante Room to the Sculptor's Studio. In this same letter Chantrey says "However see you I *must* and *will* for the purpose of sucking your brains about the outside finishing of the *Soannean Elevation*."

The marble bust of Soane by Chantrey which was commenced in 1827, was only completed in 1829. It was a gift in token of respect from Sculptor to Architect.

In reference to this work Chantrey writes on Sunday April 5, 1829 from Belgrave Place.

My dear Sir

After repeated efforts -- attended with various success -- I have at last persuaded myself that my labours are brought to a successful termination, but whether the Bust which I have made shall be considered like John Soane, or Julius Cæsar, is a point that cannot be determined by you or me, I will however maintain that as a work of art I have never produced a better. Will you give me an hour to consider it quietly on tuesday next at *eleven* or *one* o'clock, if you come you need not send an answer.

Very sincerely Yours
F. Chantrey

The sculptor's busts have been praised for their treatment of the fleshy parts of the face. The attitude and general pose of the Soane bust is fine and probably

characteristic, but as a portrait it seems to rank much below the Lawrence painting as a revelation of the character of the man, and it does not appear to have been received with the same universal approval from Sir John Soane's friends, as was the case with the work of the painter.

Sculptor and Architect alike had in common an untiring devotion and boundless generosity in the pursuit of their art.

That Chantrey valued Soane's opinion is shown by a letter written in August 1831, in which he says, "When you have nothing better to do, pray drive through Hanover Square and look at my Pitt. Is it high enough, or is it too high?, an honest opinion from a friend is worth having."

The sculptor had been attacked on this question of high pedestals one to which he attached the greatest importance.

The friendly relations between Sculptor and Architect ended only with the latter's death in 1837.

It is hoped that this Publication may attract the attention of students and lovers of Sculpture to that aspect of Soane's famous House and Collection.

The Curator thought that examples of the work of the 18th. Century and Soane period, would be perhaps the most acceptable and immediately useful selection that could be made for the Students and Visitors of the Museum. The Antique marbles and casts, and the specimens of what Soane rather aptly called the "Medicean" age, will not of course escape their attention and study.

Arther T. Bolton F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.
Curator of Sir John Soane's Museum,
13 Lincoln's Inn Fields. September, 1919.

GROUP OF FLAXMAN MODELS.

RIOU MONUMENT. CUPID AND PSYCHE. RESIGNATION. MANSFIELD. MATERNITY.
MRS. FLAXMAN. BURNS. PITT MONUMENT.

The aim of Sir John Soane, R. A., to exemplify in his house the union of Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting was one worthy of his high ambition to illustrate and promote the study of Architecture and the Allied Arts. How far, from an ideal point of view, he succeeded need not be considered here, as we are concerned rather with the actual way in which he endeavoured to effect his purpose, and with the examples which he has left for our instruction and benefit. In his house and museum he has followed out two lines of thought--the value of the Antique for study, and the preservation of the actual work of the artists of his own time. The latter is really the more original idea, as it is not often that an artist concerns himself in this way with the work of his own contemporaries. The value of the Soane Collection as a deposit of the work of the period of the last half of the eighteenth century and of the first quarter of the nineteenth has been perhaps somewhat overlooked.

Sir John Soane had had practical experience of the employment of sculpture in architecture, and from his early days (1770) in the Academy schools had associated with the students of all three arts. The occasion on which he was presented with the coveted distinction of the Gold Medal in Architecture for his Triumphal Bridge was that of Sir Joshua Reynolds' seventh discourse--December, 1776. On the same night the gold medal for sculpture was given to H. Webber for the oval medallion

Plate I. The subject was the Judgment of Midas, and this cast, placed on the staircase immediately above the door leading into the South Drawing-room, is understood to be almost the sole relic of the artist, except a model of Cerberus held by Hercules, also in the Soane, and some other work not clearly specified for Wedgwood. Neither the birth, death, or other works of H. Webber appear to be known, and it is a striking instance of the submergence of a successful competitor, which is not without example in artistic history. Soane himself tells us nothing more, except that "under the auspices of the late Mr. Wedgwood he so happily improved our taste, particularly in the imitation of Etruscan pottery." It also seems to be recorded that Webber went to Italy in the same year as Flaxman (1787). In those days a student obtaining the gold medal did not necessarily proceed to travel. It was in the nature of a further award, and subject to the King's approval. Thus it was by Sir Wm. Chambers' introduction of young Soane to the King that the architect had the good fortune to proceed to Italy, and so to lay the foundation of his future success in his profession. In this oval medallion Webber's treatment is pictorial, and hardly self-explanatory. The cast is about 4 ft. 3 in. high by 3 ft. 6 in. wide, and the relief of the head of the principal figure on the right, which is violently brought out is quite 6 inches. The same striving for pictorial effect is seen in the Hercules, which is about 2 ft. 2 in. high on a circular base of about 1 ft. 4 in. diameter. The hero is seated cross-legged on a rock with his head thrown to one side, evidently in order to develope the muscular treatment of the back. He holds Cerberus by a chain in one hand, while the other is dramatically drawn across the figure. The animal is shown twisting round the figure, with his three heads tossed in a picturesque confusion. The general effect is reminiscent rather of a piece of Dresden china than of the sobriety of sculpture. In the "Royal Academy and its Members" (by J. E. Hodgson, R. A., and F. A. Eaton, M. A., London, Oct., 1905) H. Webber's name occurs only in a list of gold medallists. John Webber, R. A. (1752-1793), however, is described as born in London, the son of a Swiss sculptor. He was educated first in Paris, and then (1775) entered the schools of the R. A. In 1776 he exhibited a portrait of his brother, Henry, which attracted Dr. Solander's attention and led to John's selection as draughtsman to Captain Cook's last expedition to the South Seas. Returning in 1780, he was elected A. R. A. 1785, and R. A. 1791. Landscapes were his subject, and there are three drawings of his in the Soane (south drawing-room). It seems possible that H. Webber may have been some relative of his, if not his actual brother.

In the case of Thomas Banks, R. A. (1735-1805) the association with Soane was intimate. There are seven of his works in the collection, of which three important examples are here illustrated.

He has been described as the first eminent English sculptor, many Italian, French, and other foreigners having been previously employed in sculpture in the round, and in association with architecture.

Thomas Banks was born in Lambeth. His father, William Banks, was at one time land steward to the Duke of Badminton. Another son, Charles, was also a sculptor, but has left no name in art. Nothing is recorded of the mother. Banks was educated at Ross, in Herefordshire. Before the age of twenty-two he had served seven years with Barlow, a carver, who resided near Scheemakers, the sculptor, and Banks is said to have worked for the latter after hours. He seems also to have practised wood carving. Afterwards he was with Wm. Kent, who concerned himself with all three arts, without much success in at any rate two of them. In 1761 Banks was studying life-drawing at the St. Martin's Lane Academy, and joined the new R. A. schools in 1769, where he attracted the favourable notice of Reynolds. Between 1763 and 1769 he obtained five awards from the Society of Arts for subjects in clay, Portland stone, and marble. One of the prizes was for a furniture design, so that his studies must have been of an all-round character. Banks obtained the gold medal in 1770, six years before Soane. Banks' prize subject was the "Rape of Proserpine," but it was for a group of "Mercury, Argus, and Io" that the Council voted him a travelling studentship of £50 a year for three years. Banks, who had already married, thereupon gave up his house in Bird Street, Oxford Road, and took his wife with him to Rome. The lady belonged to the Wooton family, and was coheiress of some property in Mayfair. Banks arrived in Rome in August, 1772, bringing with him an introduction from Carlini, a sculptor employed by Adam, to Capizzoli, who helped him very much by his instruction in the art of cutting marble. In Rome he became acquainted with Gavin Hamilton, Townley, and Fuseli. As he spent seven years in Rome--1772-9--part of his time would coincide with that of Soane, who arrived in Italy in 1777. The succeeding seven years Banks was working in London, and in 1784 he had reached a position which entitled him to election as Associate. He must have felt, however, that his prospects were dubious, as in that year he accepted the Empress Catherine's invitation to Russia, and his statue of "Love Pursuing a Butterfly" was purchased for the palace at Tsarkö Selo. A commission, however, to execute an allegorical representation of the "Armed Neutrality" scared the artist back to his native country, where he had already (1785) been elected R. A. In 1784 he had exhibited an heroic "Frenzied Achilles," executed for Johnes of Hafod, in Cardigan, the plaster cast of which is at the Royal Academy. His diploma work was a "Fallen Titan." The fine oval relief of "Thetis Consoling Achilles after the Death of Patroclus," illustrated (Plate II) from the cast on the staircase of the Soane, is in the National Gallery. This was modelled by Banks while in Italy between the years 1772-9. It measures about 3 ft. 9 in. by 3 ft. 3 in., and has considerable relief in parts as will be seen by the shadows. Though possibly rather overcrowded with subsidiary figures, it is an expressive composition, with a good deal of movement.

The high relief immediately below, called "Caractacus before Claudius," belongs to Banks' Roman period. It would be an effective panel for the decoration of a building. The spaces are well filled, but the excessive height of the dais on which

the principal figure is seated gives a sense of crowding, which is emphasised by the distorted attitude of the Emperor Claudius, who practically turns his back on the spectator. The fact that a reference to the Annals of Tacitus (lib. XII.) is necessary to explain the subject is also a characteristic and serious drawback to its merits as sculpture.

Mason's poem "Caractacus" (1759) may have had something to do with the choice of the subject. From the account in Tacitus it would appear that the two figures on the dais are Claudius and his wife Agrippina, the standing woman is uncertain, the intervening figure that of the hero's brother(?): while the two women falling into each other's arms would be his wife and daughter, all four having been pardoned by the Emperor. The war had lasted nine years, Ostorius Scapula being the Roman general, A. D. 50. Caractacus reigned at Cardigan over the Silures (i.e., South Wales), but the final battle seems to have been fought in Shropshire. Caractacus fled to the Brigantes, but was handed over to the Romans and sent to Rome. Tacitus takes occasion of his appearance before Claudius to insert a fine defence of liberty, which he represents the hero as delivering. The size is 4 ft. 8½in. by 2 ft. 6 in., and the depth is about four inches, with another inch in relief of the parts projected beyond the enclosing margin. The panel is described as terra-cotta, but so great is the weight that it seems more likely to be Coade's stone. The marble executed from this relief, exhibited at the R. A. in 1780, was at Stowe. The more ideal and architecturally suitable medallions, executed for the Bank, are much finer works (Plate III). A pair of these were commissioned by Soane in 1801 for the Lothbury Court, where they occupy important positions between the columns flanking the great archway. "Night and Morning" are the subjects, the ascending horses in the one being contrasted with the descending in the other. The lines thus obtained are soundly devised on the same principles as the Grecian Metopes, which are designed to contrast the severe vertical triglyphs in the Doric entablature. The size of the medallion is 4 ft. 7 in. diameter over all, or 3 ft. 11 in. between the enclosing moulding, and the relief is about 6 inches.

Evidently these medallions are the outcome of Banks' studies in Rome, as there are in the corridor of the Soane two models in terra-cotta by him of the reliefs on the Arch of Constantine at Rome, representing "Morning" or the "East" and "Evening" or the "West." These in the original are eight feet in diameter. It is instructive to compare Banks' executed reliefs with these originals, as, although the general idea is the same in both cases, a number of important variations will be noticed all directed to an improvement in the compositional effect. These small models are about two feet in diameter, or one-quarter of the Roman originals. Another ideal subject preseved in the Soane is a bas-relief of "The Angel Releasing St. Peter from Prison." This is 2 ft. by 2 ft. 4 in., with a projection of three inches in part only, the whole being in very low relief. Though Biblical in origin, the treatment is again Grecian. A Greek youth seated represents St. Peter, while behind two tall angels, with wings and Greek high-waisted garments, push back some very

matter-of-fact prison doors, "with stock-locks, and barrel bolts complete." An arch of distressing outline frames the two angels' heads against a background of a cross-bar grille. Like all Banks' work, the panel is not devoid of grace, however inadequate in treatment for the nominal subject represented. Banks unfortunately was chiefly employed on the vast monuments of the period, such as we regret to see in St. Paul's, cumbering up the floor space rather than decorating the building. There is a model by Banks in the Soane for a monument of this type to commemorate Earl Howe (1725-1799) for his victory off Ushant on June 1, 1794. It is about 18 in. long by 21 in. high to the top of plain stele, at the foot of which is a seated Britannia, with shield, sword, and lion, giving a hand to the standing Earl (10 in. high) who is in Greek costume. A third figure, a Greek woman of the same height, but placed on a lower level, proclaims the hero. The main plinth ($6\frac{1}{2}$ in. high) is a bold mass decorated with boys playing with the long barrel of a cannon. The main group suffers from a discontinuity of effect. It is almost a bas-relief in the round. Far more interesting is the famous sleeping girl, Penelope Boothby (died 1791), the only child of Sir Brooke Boothby, who at a still earlier age was painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds. The monument is in Ashbourne Church, Derbyshire. This is perhaps the finest of this type of monument, one which appeals powerfully to English sentiment.

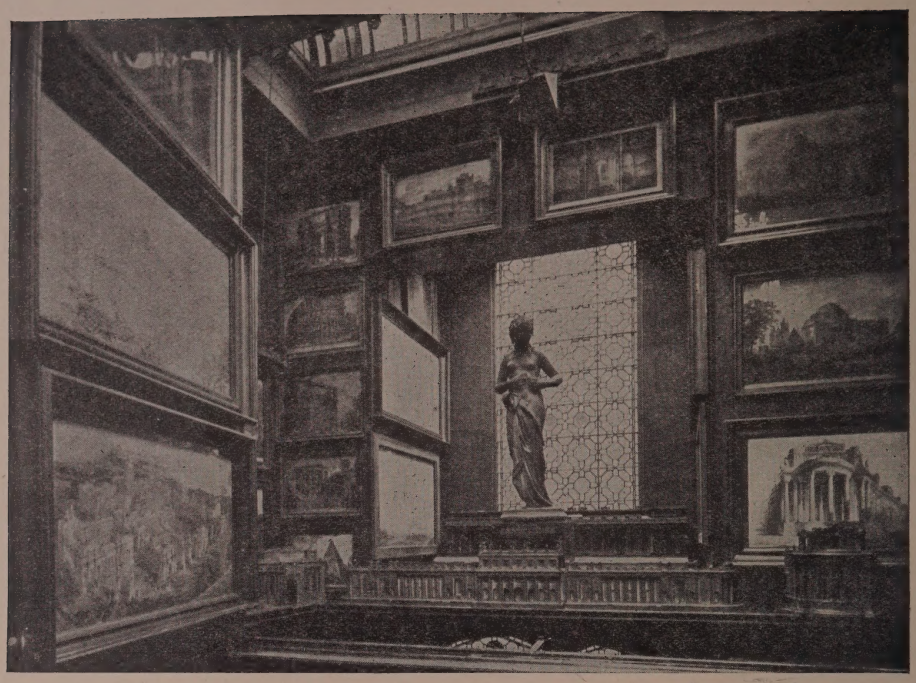
A small model in a glass case of "A Dying Patriot" illustrates the Greek feeling that inspires Banks' work, while a curious Indian subject, Krishna, a Hindoo Deity--with one of his wives seated on a crocodile--presented by Banks to Soane, records his width of interest. Amongst his work of an architectural character should be mentioned the large Shakespeare panel for G. Dance's façade of Boydell's Gallery formerly in Pall Mall.

Banks, dying in 1805, does not figure in any of Soane's later work. As a man he is described as being "in every way admirable: God-fearing, earnest, and industrious; a devoted husband and father; kindly, generous, and charitable, with none to say an ill word of him."

A mask of his features taken in early life is preserved in the Soane Collection. His profile was also drawn by Flaxman in June, 1804.

Sir Thomas Laurence in 1826 refers with praise to Banks' collection of drawings and engravings of the old masters. Among his friends Banks counted Cosway, Hoppner, Fuseli, Flaxman, and Horne Tooke. There is a personal account of him by Allan Cunningham, and another with a portrait in the "European Magazine" of September, 1791. His bust is to be seen in the nave of the Abbey. Banks died February 2, 1805, and was buried in Paddington Churchyard.

The marble bust of Sir Wm. Chambers, R. A. (1726-1796), the architect of Somerset House and first Treasurer of the Royal Academy, stands in a niche on the staircase of the Soane (Plate IV). It is 2 ft. 8 in. high by about 2 ft. in width. Soane gives in his "Description" an extract from a letter, dated December 12, 1832, from J. W. Hiort (1772-1861), of H. M. Office of Works. "I herewith transmit to you the bust of Sir Wm. Chambers, so much appreciated by the gentlemen of this



NYMPH BY SIR RICHARD WESTMACOTT R. A.
VIEW IN THE HOGARTH ROOM

department. Their high esteem for him induced them to obtain the skilful services of Mr. Westmacott as the sculptor; and he, sharing their veneration for the deceased, exerted himself, as the bust abundantly testifies."

One must assume, therefore, that this apparent guise of an old Roman was real to them. Chambers, who was actually of Scots origin though he laid stress on the accident of being born in Sweden, had a fine fund of native obstinacy and determination. Reynolds himself confessed that he was his master at the Academy. Chambers' prestige, as former tutor in architecture to George III while Prince of Wales, had aided the infant institution from its birth in 1769. There was no development in Chambers' art or opinions; the latest edition of his "Civil Architecture" (1759) simply reiterates his derision of Greek work after the lapse of a generation. The old school fell back on him as a sheet-anchor against the innovations of Soane at the Bank in 1794-96, which shows that the young architect, while appreciating the veteran and remaining grateful for his early encouragement, knew how to think for himself. Sir Richard Westmacott, R.A. the sculptor of the bust, was employed by Soane after the death of Banks for the statue of William Pitt in the National Debt Redemption Office (1817-18). A cast of his "Nymph" (the original in marble at Castle Howard) occupies the place of honour in the Hogarth Room, built 1824-5. On January 16, 1826, Westmacott, accepting an invitation to dine with Soane, adds a postscript, "Mrs. Westmacott is impatient to see the 'Nymph' since

my account of the honour you have done her." Sir Richard Westmacott, R. A., (1776-1856), was son of a statuary-mason in Mount Street, Grosvenor Square, where he began his studies, proceeding to Rome at the age of eighteen and becoming a pupil of Canova (1757-1822). He obtained a gold medal in the Academy of St. Luke and first prize at that of Florence. He returned 1796, married, and settled down at 14 South Audley Street. Besides the usual monuments in St. Paul's and the Abbey, the statues of Fox in Bloomsbury Square, the Duke of Bedford in Russell Square, and the Duke of York on the Column, are the best known of his works. The Achilles in Hyde Park, an adaptation from the famous Monte Cavallo antique, is an instance of his limitations, while the pediment of the British Museum is an even duller version of the great ideas of the past.

Westmacott was elected A. R. A. 1805 and R. A. 1811. In 1827, on the death of Flaxman, he became Professor of Sculpture in the Royal Academy. He was knighted in 1837, the year of Soane's death, but seems to have produced little more during the last twenty years of his life. He was more the friend and ally of Sir Robert Smirke, the dull architect of the British Museum, than of the original and inventive founder of the Soane.

Josiah Wedgwood (1730-95) is one of the great figures of Flaxman's early days that haunt the locality of Soho Square. His first London showroom had been in Charles Street, Grosvenor Square, in 1765, at which time he had in hand the tea service for Queen Charlotte, which gave rise to the "Queen's Ware."

In 1762 Wedgwood had been appointed Queen's Potter, and it is possible that he came in contact with Robert Adam at this time, when he also was doing work for the Queen. Wedgwood had actually started on his own account in 1758, but it was the building of the Etruria Works, opened with the first throw on June 13, 1769, which marks the decisive stage in the creation of the famous industry. The estate was bought in 1766-67, and Mr. Pickford, of Derby, was the architect. Lord Shelburne visited Etruria in 1770 and used his influence to introduce the ware into Portugal.

The well-known medallion portraits began in 1766 with that of William Pitt, and had a great sale. A characteristic likeness of Robert Adam appears in this series.

The second showroom in 1768 was off St. Martin's Lane, at the corner of Great Newport Street, facing towards Long Acre. This establishment proving inadequate a great discussion arose regarding a new position to be taken on the Adelphi Estate, then just in course of development by the Adams. Ultimately in 1773 the lease was arranged by the Adams of a large house in Greek Street, Soho, duly christened as "Portland House."

It had been a docter's house, and possessed a dissecting-room at the rear. These premises were opened in April, 1774, though still incomplete, and at once, under Bentley's clever management, became a social centre of the highest class.

Mr. and Mrs. Bentley moved to Greek Street from Chelsea, and Portland House became a recognised London show. Bentley's partnership with Wedgwood began

about 1768, and the numerous letters exchanged between them rorm an extensive and valuable record. Unfortunately while we have the letters to Bentley, those from him to Wedgwood do not appear to have survived. The work of Caylus and the proof-sheets of Sir William Hamilton's book (1766-67), together with vases lent by the Duke of Northumberland, were drawn upon as sources for the famous Etruscan Vases of 1769. It is often overlooked, however, that Robert Adam was a prime mover in this respect, and the popular practice of attributing all the decorative elements of the late eighteenth-century art to Wedgwood, Flaxman, and Angelica Kauffman is one of the vagaries of criticism.

The same embassy of Lord Cathcart that opened Russia to Wedgwood, and produced the famous dinner service made for the Empress Catherine, brought also a command for a magnificent piano from Robert Adam's design in 1771.

Wedgwood's ware in Vases and in plaques, panels and chimney-pieces is freely met with in Adam's buildings. There is a chimney-piece in jasper at Kedleston, of about 1777, but the pilaster panels of Sion Gateway must, I think, have been composition, possibly those of the Adelphi Buildings are also of the same material. There is an interesting reference to Robert Adam in the Bentley-Wedgwood correspondence (September 7, 1771), apropos of a visit to Etruria by a Mr. Gifford and his lady, who lived near Wolverhampton:

"He told me he was going to build, and should be a good customer for bas-reliefs, both for furniture and to be set in stucco. He said a great deal in praise of Mr. Adam as a man of genius and invention, and an excellent architect, and Mr. Freeman assured me that he knew Mr. Adam kept modellers at Rome employed in copying bas-reliefs and other things for them, and he thought a connection with them would be of great use to us."

Besides early attempts at terra-cotta for building purposes there was another material, "Coade's Artificial Stone," which was made at Lambeth. This may be regarded as the beginning of Stiff's and Doulton's great establishments. Pieces signed by Coade are to be seen at Croome and other great houses of the period. Bacon, the sculptor, was working in 1769 at Coade's, then newly established; and, as we have seen, Banks' "Caractacus" is probably of the same material. The two statues in the façade of the Soane (1812) are of Coade's stone.*

Flaxman (1755-1826) was discovered by the Wedgwood firm in 1775, and in 1776 he modelled for them some bas-reliefs for chimney-pieces. The Wedgwood catalogue for 1777 contains a number of pieces by Flaxman. Out of eighty-one bas-reliefs, medallions, and tablets, no less than thirty are by him. The first of the Wedgwood catalogues was issued from Great Newport Street, and came out in 1773, whilst the second edition of 1775 was from Greek Street, and other editions followed from this last address. The elder Flaxman's shop for the sale of plaster-casts, &c., was first at the Golden Head in New Street, Covent Garden, from which it was moved in 1775 to 420 Strand, opposite the Adelphi. Flaxman, the father, had returned to London from York when the boy was six months old. The mother's name

* Coade's Catalogue (1784) says "*burnt* artificial stone".

was Lee; the father married again, and the stepmother, Gordon, was very good to the boy. A delicate and precocious child, young Flaxman gained medals of the Society of Arts at the early ages of twelve and fifteen. He was a student in 1770 at the Royal Academy, where he obtained the Silver Medal for a figure of Neptune in ware, but failed to obtain the Gold two years later. Between 1772-82 Flaxman had thirteen exhibits at the Royal Academy. Wedgwood must have known him at this period, as, in January 1775, he writes to Bentley: "I am glad you have met with a modeller, and that Flaxman is so valuable an artist. It is but a few years since he was a most supreme coxcomb, but a little experience may have cured him of that foible." It is possible that the modeller referred to was Henry Webber.

In Wedgwood's later opinion Flaxman was "the genius of sculpture." William Blake (1757-1827) and Thomas Stothard, R.A. (1755-1834) were the young artist's particular companions.

In 1782 Flaxman, to the despair of the bachelor Reynolds, made his happy marriage with Anne (1760-1820), daughter of William Denman, a gunstock maker in Mansell Street, Whitechapel. The young couple established themselves at 27 Wardour Street.

In December, 1781, there was a great sale of Wedgwood ware at Christie's Auction Rooms, next to Cumberland House, in Pall Mall. The sale was due to Bentley's death, and the showrooms were immediately re-opened with fresh stock.

Bentley had died November 26, 1780, at the age of fifty. He was twice married, but left no children. His tomb in Chiswick Church, where he was buried on December 2, was designed by James Stuart (1713-88), with, it is said, Scheemakers (1691-1773) as sculptor, the material being Wedgwood ware.

It may be remarked here that Webber, the resident modeller at Etruria, was recommended by Chambers and Reynolds. It is said that Webber, as well as Flaxman, went to Rome in 1787.

Flaxman, before leaving for Italy, renders an account to Wedgwood which affords valuable evidence of his work for the period from July 11 to August 10, 1787. It amounts to £116 11*s.* 9*d.*, payments which appear to be in the nature of out-of-pocket expenses.

Wedgwood died January 3, 1795, at the age of sixty-six. The monument to him in Stoke Church is by Flaxman.

The famous Chessmen in the Soane (Plates V and VI) belong to this early period, Flaxman's models having been made by Wedgwood in jasper ware in 1785. This Soane set is particularly interesting as having belonged to Flaxman himself. They were presented to Sir John Soane by Maria Denman. They are selected specimens from three different sets of chessmen, which accounts for their varying scale. The dozen illustrated here have been specially arranged in three groups of four each. Each group will be seen to compose well, as though designed as parts of a pediment group of an early Greek type. The figures display much individuality, and it is evident that the designer has been interested in mediæval as well as classical sculptures. It is a

misfortune that Flaxman had not the opportunity of working out some great assemblance of similar sculptural figures in relation to the lines of a grand architectural composition. His work tended eventually to bas-relief, to the exclusion of work of this type, which, while in free-relief, still retains a sense of architectural composition. The tallest figures here are $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches, including the base of an inch; the smaller ones are 3 and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in height, measured over their respective bases.

Leaving for Italy with his wife, Flaxman's absence proved to be a long one. They lived in the Via Felice at Rome, and the young sculptor found patrons in Mr. Knight, of Portland Place, and in the Bishop of Derry, Frederick Hervey, Earl of Bristol. A group executed by Flaxman for the latter patron is now at Ickworth.

He also produced a "Cephalus and Aurora" for Thomas Hope in marble. While in Rome Flaxman composed the famous drawings from Homer's Iliad, thirty being made for Mrs. Hare Naylor at fifteen shillings each. They were published in 1805. He was elected a member of the Academies of Florence and Carrara.

On his return in 1794, Flaxman established himself in Buckingham Street, Fitzroy Square, for the rest of his life. The model of the noble monument to Robert Adam's patron, the great Earl of Mansfield (1705--March 20, 1793), in the north transept of the Abbey, was exhibited in 1796 (Plates VII and VIII). The commission was given to Flaxman in 1793 while still at Rome, and seems to have been a factor in his return. It is therefore extraordinarily interesting and important in the history of his art. By May 14, 1795, the figure of the Earl had been cast in plaster, but it was only in June, 1797, that the large figure of Wisdom is described as "going forward." This shows the growth of the masterpiece, which is dated 1801 on the marble.

Flaxman's monument to the Earl of Mansfield is described by Soane "as the first insulated monument in England." Rather an ambiguous expression, but evidently he had in his mind the current type of mountainous monuments backed against the walls of St. Paul's and the Abbey. He says: "The Earl is represented in his judicial robes sitting in a curule chair, in the act of giving judgment: he is supported on each side by Wisdom and Justice, as represented by the ancients. Death is classically personified by the youth with the inverted torch at the back of the pedestal."

In view of Soane's friendship with Flaxman and his family, this represents no doubt the sculptor's own scheme. The weak side of these allegories comes out in the fact that the justly-admired figure at the back might easier be taken to be Grief, Sorrow, or perhaps the lament of the suitors on the occasion of his lordship's last and final judgment. The architecture of the monument is quite Soanic and most agreeably related to the figures. The height of the model is 3 ft., and the main drum supporting the chair is about 1 ft. in diameter. This part is eleven, the low podium six and a-half, and the steps five inches high. The side figures are fifteen and a-half inches. It is a question whether the rather heavy group of the coronet, shield, fasces, and robes between the two figures in front really helps the design. It will be noticed that in the back view there is an effect of greater height, and unity of design

is better realised here in spite of the difficulty attaching to the back view of a seated figure.

It is interesting to note that the sculptor's first monument had been one to Chatterton, the youthful poet, who so disturbed Walpole's self-satisfied existence. It was executed in 1780 and placed in St. Mary's, Redcliffe, Bristol.

THE DOME

Flaxman, who had been elected A.R.A. 1797 and R.A. 1800, was appointed Professor of Sculpture in 1810, and his first lecture was delivered in 1811. Fuseli described them as "sermons by the Rev. John Flaxman," but they are still worthy of the student's attention, not so much on account of the sculptor's wide knowledge of antiquity, as then understood, as from the hints and suggestions derived from his own technical studies. He also contributed articles to Rees' "Encyclopædia of Arts and Sciences" (45 vols. 4to., London, 1819) on Armour Basso-relievo, Beauty, Bronze, Busts, Composition, Casts, and Ceres.

In the article on Basso-relievo Flaxman's general proposition is perfectly sound. He says:

"Basso-relievo, although a considerable province of sculpture, is in a particular manner allied to architecture and under its dominion; as any considerable work of this kind must be for the pediment, frieze, or panel of a building, or architectural form such as a sarcophagus or pedestal; and therefore the general shape of the ground, the distribution and perfection of the figures, must be subservient to the surrounding and balancing parts, in order that they may produce a beautiful whole," and, later on while dealing with the Arch of Severus, he says: "It is also to be observed, that the small figures in these great squares are so boldly relieved that they interfere with and destroy the effect of the smaller architectural members near

them." The article in question begins from the Egyptian Hieroglyphics, but as a whole it is too much based on authorities like Pliny and other classical writers of doubtful authority in art, as later and more scientific researches since Flaxman's day have demonstrated. The sculptor has, however, an idea of the value of later work, like that at Orvieto, and in the cathedrals of the Middle Ages, though his account of work subsequent to classic times would be considered very thin and meagre nowadays. Speaking of the famous Ghiberti gates, he regrets the introduction of perspective, then a new "discovery," and speaks of "the delusive hope of adding a new charm to sculpture which belongs to painting exclusively." "From this time little can be said in commendation of the practice of basso-relievo. Memory was substituted for imitation, fancy for nature, and the consequence was those various species of affectation which are called manners. The school of John of Bologna, Alfardi, and Bernini, will justify this remark; and whoever takes the trouble to examine their productions in this department of sculpture will see that art more than nature has been their object." At the time this article was written Flaxman, though still of the eighteenth-century school, had had the great advantage to be derived from a close study of the Elgin Marbles (brought to England in 1814), previously known only from Stuart and Revett, in the case of those who, like himself, had not been in person to Greece. Flaxman had made a careful set of tracings of Stuart's drawings before he was in a position to buy the book. The visitor to the Soane should always remember that the Apollo Belvidere and Venus de Medici were the standards of taste of the period of its formation, and that the Venus de Milo was only discovered a few years before the date of Flaxman's death, and much too late in Soane's life to affect the latter's general attitude as a student and collector. The Soane contains a great number of Flaxman panels and models, but it would serve no purpose to enlarge in these pages on those not included in this present series of examples. Soane himself draws attention to the medallion portraits presented to him by the sculptor in August, 1826, the year of his death, and to a Cupid Bacchus by Maria Denman, his sister-in-law. It was through the latter that some of the finest of Flaxman's models came to the Soane.

On June 6, 1833, Maria Denman writes to Soane from 77 Upper Norton Street: "I have been looking through the Studies in Buckingham Street (Fitzroy Square) and find so many beautiful things that I think we cannot fail finding some one or more that may suit you, either in small groups, statues, or basso-relievos of different forms and sizes. I think, therefore, I had better, if you will permit me, call on you some day and walk through your museum in order to ascertain what places there are to receive works of art--as to dimension and form--as by that I think your choice must be regulated." Two years later Soane sends a cheque for ten guineas for "casts, statues, and repairs," a payment which probably relates to this proposal.

The copy of the model for the Shield of Achilles (1818) was presented to Soane by the silversmiths (Messrs. Rundell & Co.) who commissioned the work from Flaxman. It is about one-third size of the silver gilt shield executed for George IV. The figures were about 6 inches high, with a relief of half an inch. Soane says:

"The heavens are represented by Apollo in his chariot, surrounded by constellations, and encircled by fixed stars: the other conceptions of the poet have been embodied with equal force and beauty. Iliad, lib. xviii., 1, 478."

The original model (1807) for the statue of Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A. (died 1793), erected in St. Paul's, being the first to be commissioned for that building, is also preserved in the Soane. It is a pleasing and graceful work, though exception has been taken to its proportions. The ideal "Britannia by Divine Providence Triumphant" (1799) (Plate IX), was a scheme for a colossal memorial of the naval victories of the time. The competitors were asked for a monument 230 feet in height, some form of pillar being in the minds of the Committee, who were raising money by a public subscription. Flaxman considered that a column would have an insufficient bulk, and evidently disliked the idea of a statue at that height. G. Dance, R.A., suggested to him the idea of a colossus, and also proposed Greenwich Hill as the site. Flaxman published a quarto pamphlet (1799) in explanation of his design, and was answered by an architect, Alexander Dufour, in a printed reply dated 1800. Soane has bound the two together. Dufour is mainly concerned to put in a word for architecture, considering that a great building uniting all the arts would be preferable. "The Spectator" has revived the idea of this naval memoral (1799), advocating its execution as a record of the sacrifices and services of the mercantile marine during the Great War, and as an expression of the "Sacred Brotherhood of the Sea." Greenwich Hill as a site is not really suitable, as Dufour pointed out. The effect would be crushing on the fine Naval Palace of Greenwich Hospital. The real site for the Britannia is the water's edge. It might face Greenwich Hospital from the opposite bank, or stand at the head of Limehouse Reach. Everyone who knows the lower river has noticed the fine effect of the tower of St. Anne's, Limehouse, though it stands back from the shore. Facing Greenwich Hospital the Britannia could be on the centre line of the Isle of Dogs, as well as on the axis of that superb group of buildings. If below Greenwich, the monument might be on the edge of Bugsby Marsh, the next peninsula enclosed by the winding of the river.

The great flight of steps which forms the podium of the design suggests a river-level approach, and two at least of the circular bastions, adorned with the prows of ships, should rise out of the water.

Apparently Flaxman contemplated the use of marble, which he hoped to have imported free. It seems an undesirable material for a work on this scale, nor would copper repousée plates on an iron framework, as employed in Il Cerano's and Bartholdi's colossi, be ideal in the Thames Valley.

The most modern of all methods might well be adopted. As a shell of reinforced concrete the figure would be indestructible and problems of foundation would be reduced to a minimum. The outer facing of a glistening white, aided by the use of gold mosaic in the helmet and prominent lines of drapery and accessories, would have a grand effect in the atmosphere in which the imposing figure would be seen. The material suggested would lend itself to a most exact reproduction of the fine, severe, outlines of Flaxman's model, which in no way depends for its effect on

minuteness of detail. In the pedestal could be formed a domed hall for a museum of an appropriate character. The cost contemplated by Flaxman, the Million Shilling Fund he suggested, would cover all the expenses.

The model for a monument to Captains Riou and Mosse, (Plate X), both killed in the attack on Copenhagen, is dated 1801, but it was unfortunately superseded by a very clumsy affair by C. Rossi, R.A., now in the north transept of St. Paul's. As this monument stands under the east window, it is possible that exception was taken to Flaxman's design because the column would have stood up in front of the window. It is a graceful and interesting composition in itself. It will be noticed that the portraits of the two officers commemorated are introduced by means of medallions, leaving a free scope for an ideal treatment of the monument as a whole. This is a scheme which has been kept in view in France, as it eliminates the difficulties of the portrait statue in a memorial of this character.

The group called "Maternal Tenderness" (1817) Plate XI, is a good example of a personal memorial which remains a monument. The spectator may know nothing of Lady Fitzharris, but remains interested in the ideality of the mother and her children. This group, executed life-size in marble, is in Christ Church, Hampshire, and, in spite of its alien surroundings, attracts attention.

Soane describes the upper one of the two bas-reliefs on Plate VI as the work of 1788 at Rome, and says that it was worked in marble after Flaxman's return (1794) for Mr. Knight, of Portland Place. He quotes Flaxman as writing to one of his friends: "After my return from Naples I was busy for three months in making a copy of the basso-relievo on the Borghese vase: this has ten whole figures on it. I have finished it according to the best of my ability; it is baked, and I have sent it to England." This panel over the frame is 4 ft. 9 in. long by 1 ft. 5 in. high, and the relief about $1\frac{1}{2}$ in.

The Bas-relief below, 4 ft. 5 in. long by 1 ft. $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. and of one inch maximum relief, "A Grecian Feast Composed from the Antique of Rome," is perhaps the more interesting of the two Compositions, and a better example of the sculptor's own character and style of work. It reveals his merits as well as certain defects, which he never entirely overcame. The great bas-reliefs famous at the time, executed for the façade of Covent Garden Theatre, Sir Robert Smirke R.A., architect (1808-9), are illustrated at the Soane in a fair-sized drawing by Maria Denman of the one called "Modern Comedy and Tragedy". There was a corresponding Antique panel on the other side of the Greek Doric portico at the entrance to the theatre. Apart from the fact that this type of Shakespeare à la grecque is now merely absurd, Flaxman's composition, regarded from the architectural point of view as part of the decoration of a building, is not even as good as it is in the earlier panel illustrated in this plate. Flaxman's drawings, as in the Homer illustrations, have always been appreciated by architects, but he has not really left any superlative example of the union of sculpture with architecture. Much is accounted for by the fact that his feeble frame could not support the manual labour of carving, and work on an actual building was always out of his reach. This accounts for the large share that work

on paper, unusual in the case of a sculptor, takes in the sum total of Flaxman's achievement.

As a sculptor he had also an unfortunate practice of working from half-size models to which is attributed lapses in proportion, a defect, which seriously detract from the standard of the perfection attained in his work. Flaxman's natural decorative sense is, however, never entirely submerged by an artificial dryness of manner, derived from his somewhat rigid and peculiarly personal interpretation of the Antique.

Mrs. Flaxman who died in 1820 had been on very friendly terms with Mrs. Soane, as is shown by the following letter, unfortunately not dated:

Mrs. Flaxman to Mrs. Soane.

Buckingham Street,
Fitzroy Square.

Good Mrs. Soane!

I have been in the dark ever since I left you, for I unfortunately left my glasses upon your table. I would have called for them myself, but I have been confined to the house ever since with the rheumatism in my hip. They tell me, if I don't nurse it away soon, it will indubitably fix itself there under the title of Sciatica or Gout, and lay me up two or three months. If it should, I am determined to come to the Gouty Man in Lincoln's Inn Fields to be nursed, for my husband will have nothing to say to a *gouty* wife. Do you agree to this? In the meantime pray send me my glasses that I may see what I am about.

With all due respects to Mr. Soane, I remain,

Truly yours,
A. Flaxman.

Amongst Flaxman's friends were the poet Hayley (bust in the Soane), Banks, Romney, Howard, Stothard, all of the Academy, Thomas Hope, M.P., and Samuel Rogers, the banker-poet. Hayley's son who however died early was the sculptor's first pupil. Flaxman died December 7, 1826, and was buried in the church of St. Giles-in-the-Fields. J. Jackson, R.A., painted his portrait, of which there is a fine engraving by C. Turner, in the Soane. A bust of Flaxman, by Baily and Dance, is in the Diploma Gallery. Sir Thos. Lawrence, P.R.A., delivered an eulogy of the deceased sculptor and his work.

To two illustrations of Eagles (Plates XII and XIII) from the decorations of Carlton House, a sculptor's name is not attached.

Soane, in his description, tells us that these eagles are "part of the architectural decorations of Carlton House, preserved when that superb structure, with the noble portico in front and one of the most classical vestibules in Europe, leading into a highly decorated staircase and suite of magnificent apartments, were demolished." He knew exactly the extent of the loss to art, because it was all the work of Henry Holland, to whom he had been, not only an assistant, but also lifelong friend. Holland had died in 1806, and Carlton House was unfortunately pulled down when

the Regent Street improvements were carried out by Nash. The Regent's original idea had been to have a direct road from this palace to a great villa on Primrose Hill. Nash does not seem to have realised in laying out the scheme that he was working up a slope, and when the new street had reached the first circus it was found, to the general surprise, that the vista consisted of an undignified view of the skylights and chimneys of the low-lying palace. It was thereupon pulled down and eventually the opening, with the well-known steps leading down to St. James Park, was formed, and here later on the Duke of York's Column was set up. The earlier work of the Regent during Holland's lifetime was excellent in every way, it was the later additions of Nash and Repton that became a byword. Some coloured views of the Carlton House interiors will be found in Pyne's "Royal Residences" (3 vols. 4to., 1819), particularly the vestibule and staircase described above. The original position of the pair of great eagles, one of which is illustrated in Plate XII, will be found to have been on either side of an archway entrance from the main landing of the staircase to the upper vestibule. They are, however, so poorly indicated in the drawing that unless Soane had preserved these originals we should have had no idea of their fine character.

These eagles are about 4 feet high by 2 feet broad, and the relief is about six inches at the head and prominent wing. The spandril eagle panel that follows Plate XIII is 3 ft. 6 in. high, the width over the tips of the wings being 3 ft. The relief is about the same. The disposition is a very effective one, the mass being concentrated where an instinctive sense of arcuated construction would suggest that it is required.

It is interesting to notice how Soane himself has dealt with the same problem in a domical spandril taller and narrower than Holland's. (See covered title page.) This cherub is one of a set of four designed and executed for the Pitt cenotaph in the National Debt Redemption Office, Sir John Soane, R.A., architect, (1817-18) in Old Jewry. The size in the model is 3 ft. 3 in. high by 1 ft. $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide. The cherub occupies one-third of the height measured from the curl of the leaf on which he is sitting. The statue of Pitt was by Westmacott, but one would hardly think these decorative boys are also his. A pair of these models are now fixed on the spandrils of the dome of the New Students' Room at the Soane, so as to present them under the conditions as far as possible of their original position and lighting. (See back cover.) Another pair was used by Soane as part of the decorations of the flat ceiling of the Monks' parlour. Cherubs, something of this type with reversed torches were used on the dies of the pedestals of the balustrade surrounding Mrs. Soane's Tomb in old St. Pancras Churchyard, executed in 1816, from Soane's designs.

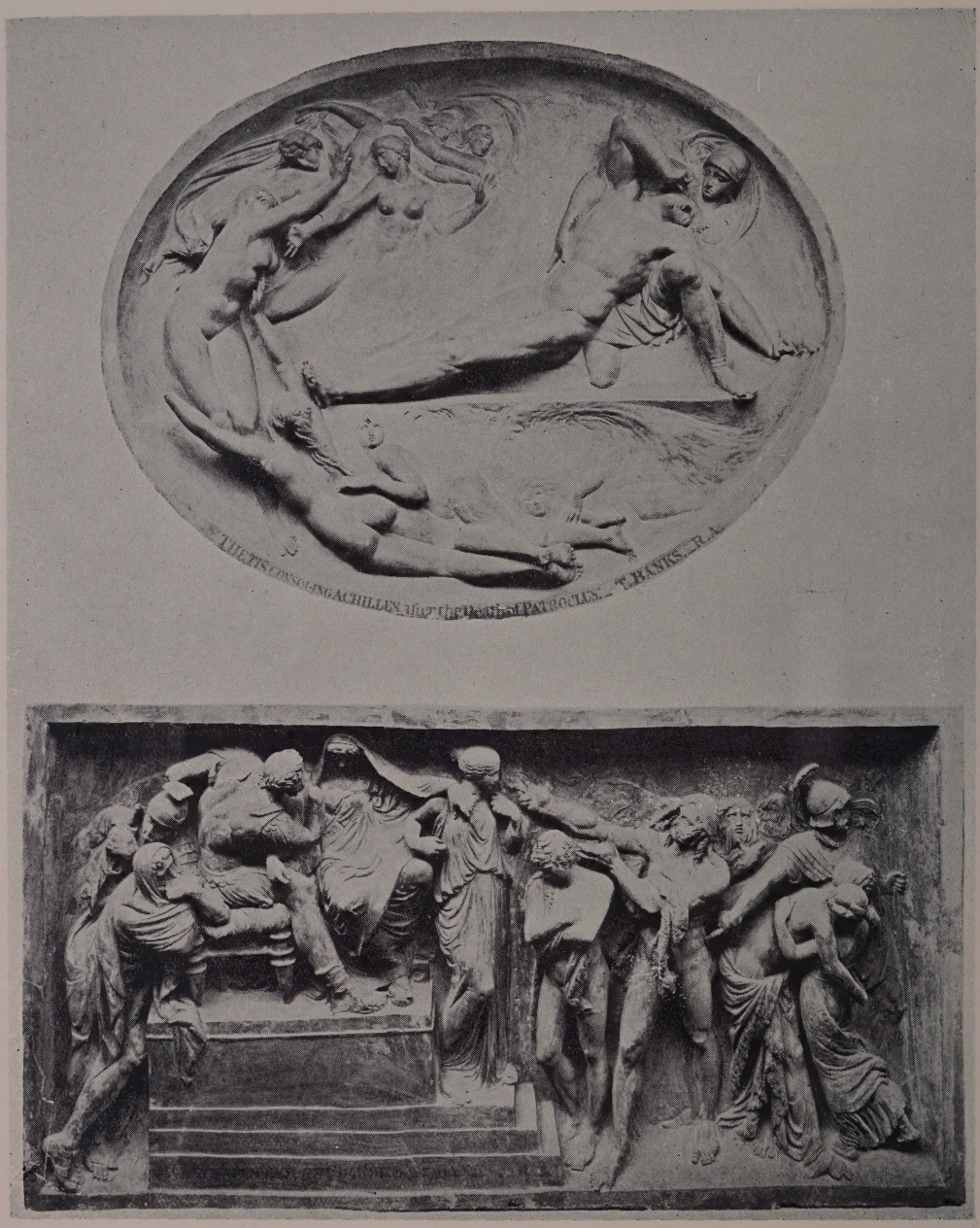
In conclusion, this selection by no means exhausts the interest of the Sculpture in the Soane even of the eighteenth century, and if this series meets with the approval of students of the art it will be a pleasure to bring out a further series of similar illustrations of the artistic treasure enshrined in Sir John Soane's Museum.

Arthur T. Bolton, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.
Curator of Sir John Soane's Museum.

ANTIQUE MARBLE VASES AND FRIEZE THAT BELONGED TO ROBERT ADAM

ROYAL ACADEMY GOLD MEDAL

AWARDED TO H. WEBBER IN 1776

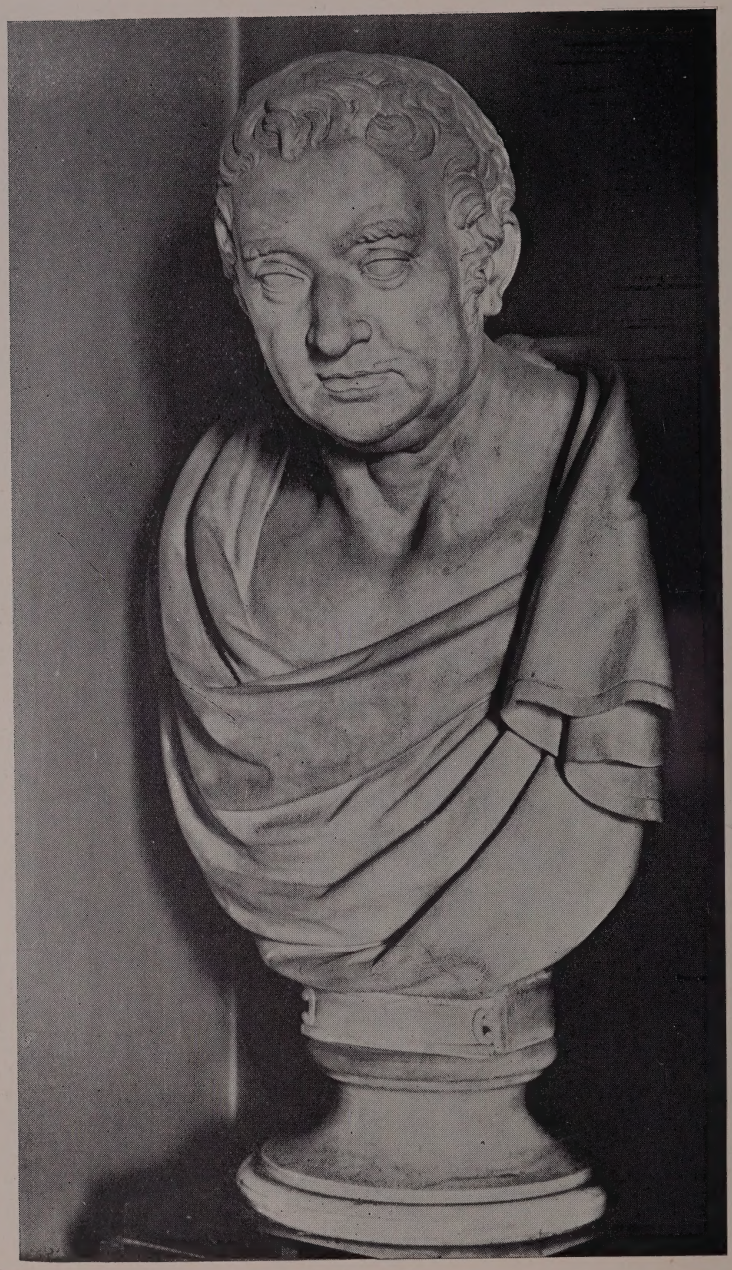


BAS-RELIEFS

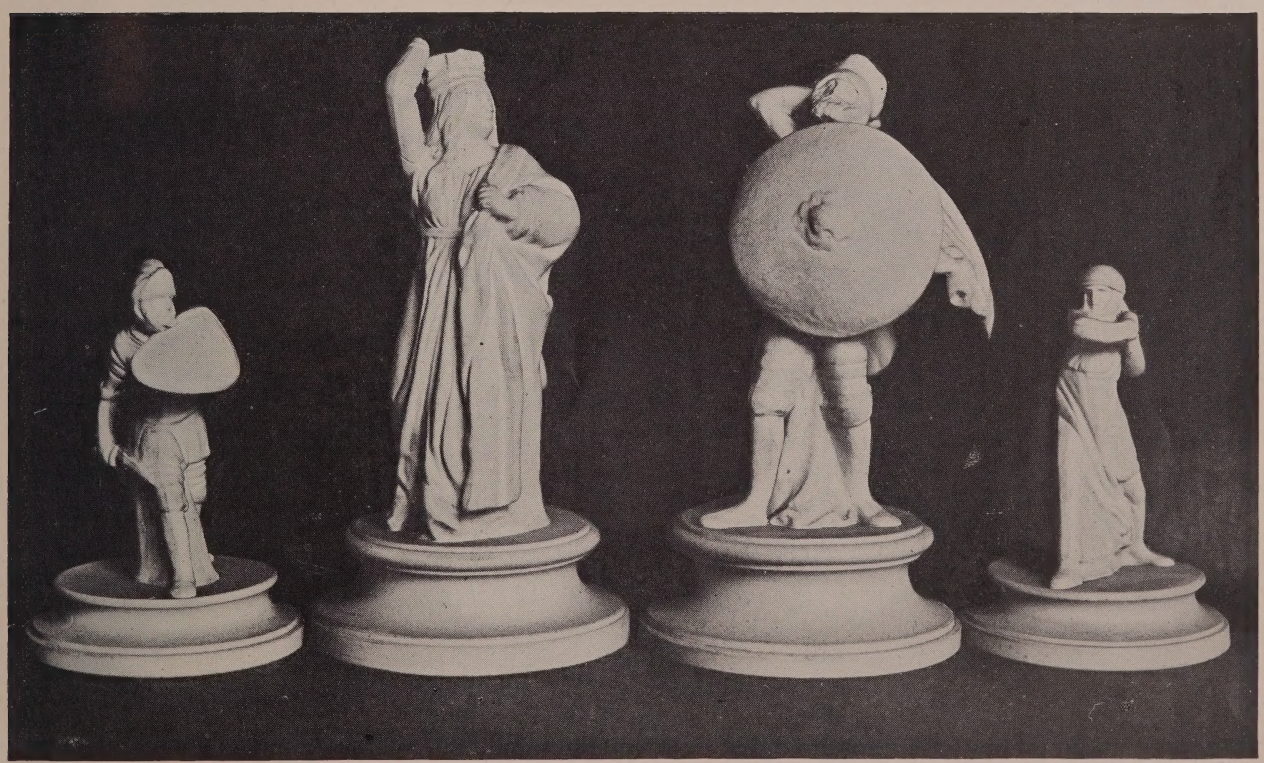
"Thetis Consoling Achilles after the death of Patroclus" and "Caractacus before Claudius" Modelled in Rome (1772-9)

T. BANKS, R. A.

MEDALLION BY T. BANKS, R. A.
For the Lothbury Court of the Bank of England 1801
SIR JOHN SOANE, R. A., ARCHITECT



MARBLE BUST OF SIR WILLIAM CHAMBERS, R. A., (1726-96)
Architect of Somerset House
SIR RICHARD WESTMACOTT R. A. 1796 (?)



TWO GROUPS OF CHESSMEN

JOHN FLAXMAN R. A. 1785

GROUP OF CHESSMEN

JOHN FLAXMAN R. A. 1785

TWO BAS-RELIEFS

Studies made in Rome, 1787-94. No. 1--From the Borghese Vase. No. 2--A Grecian Feast.

JOHN FLAXMAN R. A.

THE ORIGINAL MODEL FOR THE MONUMENT TO THE EARL OF MANSFIELD, (1705-1793) IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

JOHN FLAXMAN R. A., 1793-1801

BACK VIEW OF THE ORIGINAL MODEL OF THE MONUMENT TO THE EARL OF MANSFIELD (1705-1793) IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

JOHN FLAXMAN R. A., 1793-1801

ORIGINAL MODEL FOR THE BRITANNIA
The figures, horsemen and cannon, life and actual size.
Height of the monument 230 feet
JOHN FLAXMAN R. A., 1799

ORIGINAL MODEL FOR A PROPOSED MONUMENT IN ST. PAUL'S

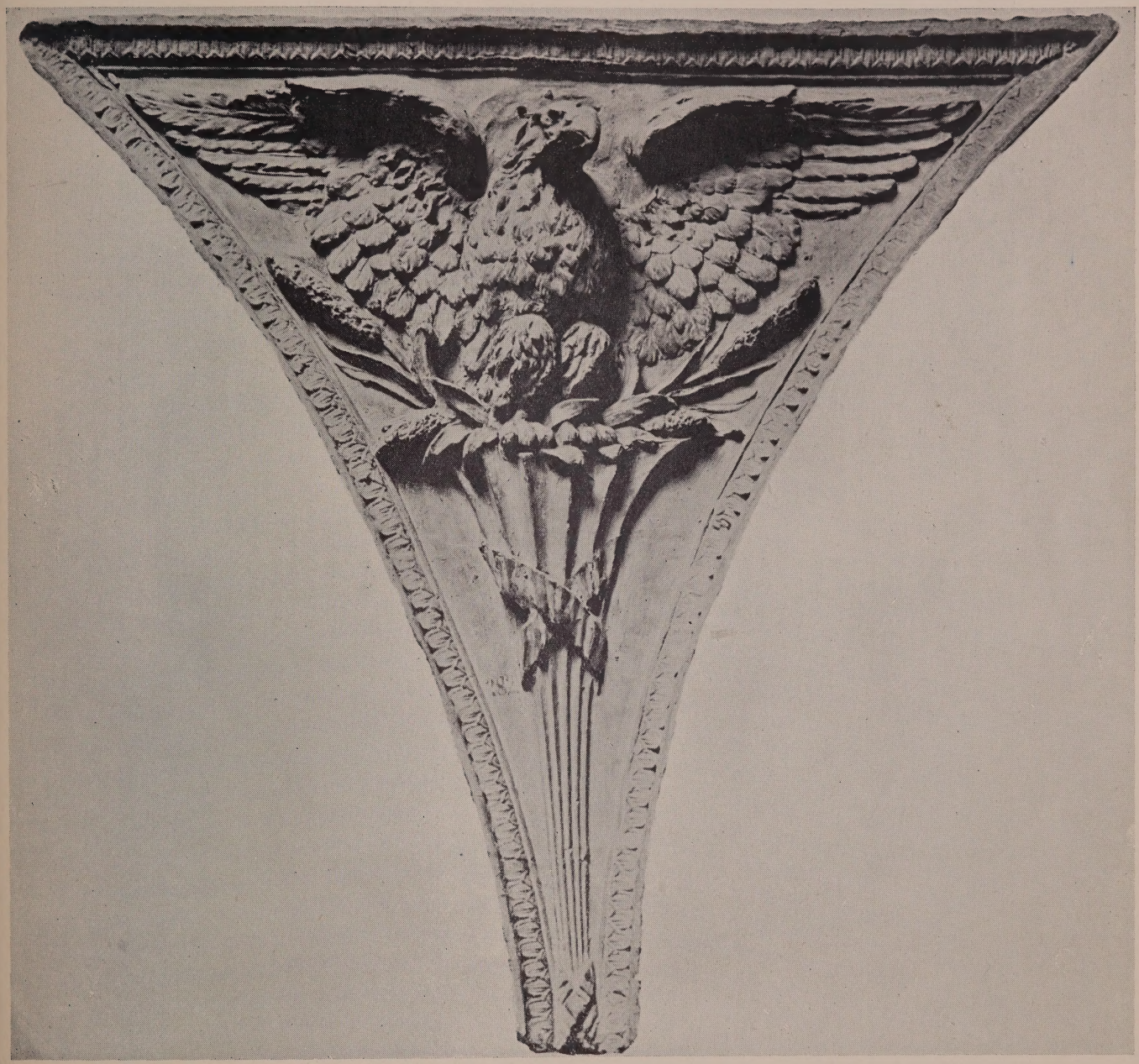
JOHN FLAXMAN R. A., 1801

MODEL OF PART OF A MONUMENT IN CHRISTCHURCH, HANTS.

JOHN FLAXMAN R. A., 1817

EAGLE FROM THE ARCH ON THE STAIRCASE OF CARLTON HOUSE

HENRY HOLLAND (1746-1806) ARCHITECT



EAGLE FROM CARLTON HOUSE

HENRY HOLLAND (1746-1806) ARCHITECT

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